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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2006  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2687  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0525  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 0108  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2599  
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI PRIORITY 0026  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 001026

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [ID](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: DPM NAJIB WELCOMES GREATER ENGAGEMENT, DISCUSSES  
CT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

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Classified By: DCM ROBERT RAPSON, REASON 1.4 (B AND D).

Summary and Comment

1. (C) Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, who is expected to become Prime Minister in late March 2009, told the Ambassador on November 11 that he anticipated a "very constructive relationship" with the incoming U.S. administration and welcomed greater engagement, which the Ambassador encouraged. On security issues, Najib said Malaysia should remain vigilant against terrorists and he defended the continued use of the Internal Security Act (ISA), but only for those posing serious threats. The Ambassador emphasized the importance of Malaysia developing law enforcement skills and capabilities to investigate and prosecute terrorists, and sentence them to long jail terms. The Ambassador identified the need to bring the underdeveloped region between Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines into the global mainstream through efforts like the Coral Triangle Initiative. Najib admitted Malaysia had had little choice but to pay the ransom for the two ships and their crews seized by pirates off the Somali coast in August. The broad-ranging November 11 meeting also covered economic priorities, export control issues and trafficking in persons concerns, reported in septels.

2. (C) Comment: Najib devoted an hour to the conversation despite a press of others waiting to see Malaysia's presumed future Prime Minister. His tone was positive and his comments reflected a clear view that there are opportunities ahead for an energized relationship. Najib raised the ISA on his own initiative, and appeared to want to distance himself from the government's use of ISA in September to detain two journalists and an opposition Member of Parliament, a move which attracted substantial public criticism. End Summary and Comment.

Najib Anticipates "Very Constructive Relationship"

3. (C) The Ambassador met on November 11 with Deputy Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, who is anticipated to take over the role of Prime Minister in late March 2009. Polcouns accompanied Ambassador as notetaker. Malaysian Foreign Ministry Deputy Secretary General II Kamal Yan bin Yahya, MFA

Senior Under Secretary for the Americas Zainuddin Yahya, and Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Senior Director for APEC Mr. Vasudevan joined DPM Najib. In the context of reviewing priorities in our bilateral relations in the lead up to the new U.S. administration, Najib stated, "we look forward to a very constructive relationship" with the incoming U.S. leadership. Malaysia would watch closely the "style, substance and personalities" of those in senior U.S. positions. "I welcome a conscious effort by the new Administration to bring back a positive image of the U.S.," Najib said, and he recommended more U.S. emphasis on engagement and "soft power" in the areas of "culture, education, free trade and investment." When the U.S. engages in such ways, "we will be as responsive as possible." Najib also welcomed more visits by senior U.S. officials, in part to help Malaysia counter problems with its own image, "which is not as positive as it should be." The Ambassador highlighted the increasing importance of Asia in U.S. policy and encouraged Najib to consider early engagement opportunities, including via ASEAN.

#### Malaysia To Remain Vigilant on CT

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¶4. (C) On issues of security, The Ambassador expressed U.S. appreciation for ongoing counterterrorism and law enforcement cooperation. Najib stated that, "we are fairly confident we are on top of (the CT situation)." The DPM, however, pointed to the continued existence of "regional hot spots," namely Mindanao and southern Thailand, and continued Jemaah Islamiyah activities, and said Malaysia had to remain vigilant against the "possible emergence of new (terrorist) cells." "We can't take this (situation) for granted," Najib added.

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¶5. (C) Najib told the Ambassador that Malaysia continued to need the Internal Security Act (ISA, which provides for detention without trial), "even though there are civil liberty concerns." In this light, "we as the government must be more conscious of how we use ISA so that people are not deprived of their civil liberties (unnecessarily)." Najib stated that ISA should be reserved only for those who pose "serious threats, like terrorists."

¶6. (C) The Ambassador noted that the U.S. and many other countries struggle with the same questions of safeguarding security while respecting due legal process and civil liberties. The Ambassador said frankly that, in some cases, we disagreed with Malaysia's standard practice of releasing terrorist suspects from ISA detention after a period of rehabilitation, as some still posed security risks and deserved lengthy jail terms for plotting or abetting terrorist activities. The Ambassador urged Malaysia to further develop the capabilities of its police and prosecutors in order to eventually be able to bring terrorists to trial and sentence them to significant prison terms (as provided for in Malaysia's penal code).

¶7. (C) Commenting on Indonesia's execution of three terrorists behind the 2002 Bali bombings, DPM Najib said there was a risk that the public display of emotion over the executions could lead to retaliation by suicide bombers. Indonesia deserved "support and recognition" for its CT efforts, Najib noted, but there remained significant gaps in Indonesia's capabilities relative to the country's sheer size. The Ambassador highlighted the need to bring the undeveloped area between Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, East Timor and Papua New Guinea into the international mainstream, explaining the importance of new programs like the Coral Triangle Initiative.

¶8. (C) Najib touched on maritime security, describing littoral states' efforts in the Straits of Malacca as a "success." The DPM acknowledged, "we got clobbered off the

Somali coast," when pirates seized two Malaysian vessels. In this situation, and like other countries, "we had little choice but to pay the ransom," Najib confided.

KEITH